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Thesis

GERHART HAUPTMANN .. HIS LIFE AND DRAMATIC WORKS

Submitted by

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In partial fulfilment of  
requirements for the de-  
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GERHART HAUPTMANN .. HIS LIFE AND DRAMATIC WORKS

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## GERHART HAUPTMANN .. HIS LIFE AND DRAMATIC WORKS

LIFE

Gerhart Hauptmann was the youngest of three sons born to Robert Hauptmann, keeper of a hotel near Obersalzbrunn in the Silesian Mountains in Germany, and his pious and upright wife, daughter of a Government official. Like his brothers Gerhart was sent to the school in the small town, but unlike them he made a very poor pupil idling away his time and caring only for telling and writing stories. He spent the first twelve years of his life very happily, reading many books and enjoying nature in his own usually quiet way. Hauptmann was sent in his thirteenth year to a secondary school in Breslau which meant only unnatural routine for him. He remained but a short time, for his father had become bankrupt and found it necessary to send his youngest son to an uncle's farm to earn a living. Hauptmann's natural inclination toward the creative art helped him to appreciate the works of Bach, Handel, and Beethoven at that time. For three years he revelled in that free life with his uncle, only to realize in the end that he must study to some purpose if he wished to attain an aim higher in life than that of the peasant.

We cannot be unaware that at an early age he had within him an artist's urge. This did not manifest itself in any tangible form for a number of years, and like



many other people Hauptmann wandered from one occupation and study to another in an attempt to find his real work. He became a student of Art in Breslau where he learned the fundamentals of sculpture. The influence of this period of his career is recognized in many of his later works. It is the goal of naturalistic art to clarify and interpret the known experiences of life, and in all of Hauptmann's works we can read into the life - the thoughts, experiences, and observations-of the author.

Michael Kramer could not have been written without the observation which Hauptmann had made of the artist and his philosophic thoughts. Likewise, Colleague Crampton is significant in showing that Hauptmann's work clings to familiar elements in his own life. These two portraits of professors at the Royal College of Art are true to the author's experience, and the sympathy we feel for Crampton in his dissappointments and for Kramer in his sorrow is sympathy for real people.

Hauptmann next attempted a study of philosophy, sociology, and natural science in the pursuit of which he became steeped in the teachings of Darwin and Marx whom he accepted as his masters. At the University of Jena, where he failed to matriculate because of his inefficiency in mathematics, he pursued studies in these social fields. His drama, Before Dawn, shows his interest



in social-ethical problems as do The Weavers, Drayman Henschel, Rose Bernd, and The Rats. In these plays the characters are viewed as the results of their social environment which is stressed to a large extent.

Hauptmann's next educational venture was a trip to the Mediterranean countries and although he wrote much while he was on this voyage, he had not yet settled upon his life's work. He established a studio in Rome, fell ill with the fever, and was forced to leave there because of the climate.

A young woman, Mary, daughter of Herr Thienemann at Mehenhaus, became Hauptmann's wife in 1884. She was one of the sisters about whom he later wrote his Jungfern vom Bischofsberg, which was Hauptmann's "Midsummer Night's Dream." The setting of the play is reproduced exactly. It was immediately after his marriage that Hauptmann, settling in Erkner, a suburb of Berlin, decided to make writing his profession. His wife's fortune made this possible, for it relieved him from anxiety about money matters. He proved his ability as a playwright within four years' time; his first drama, Vor Sonnenaufgang, was published and staged in 1889.

Hauptmann's marriage was not imprudent, and yet a barrier rose between him and his wife. He had the idealist's nature, while she was the practical "hausfrau."





For a long time Hauptmann lived in seclusion, trying to avoid publicity on the break between himself and his wife. At this time Hauptmann passed through a severe crisis in his personal life which left its note in his later dramas. "In The Reconciliation, in Colleague Crampton, in Michael Kramer, above all, in Lonely Lives, the recorded struggle has its roots in the marriage of an intellectual idealist to a woman of inferior knowledge and endowment." It is not only in these plays that he deals with the problem of inequality in marriage; he returns to the thought again and again. It is basic to The Sunken Bell and to Gabriel Schilling's Flight. In 1905 he was divorced, and later married Margarethe Marschalk, an actress and violinist.

Hauptmann's first extended voyage resulted in the publication of an epic, Promethidenlos, in 1885. "Two notes ring through this work: pity for the darkness of wretched humanity; longing for the light of heavenly beauty. He himself is the hero, who shudders at the sight of the misery in the slums of Naples, whose heart bleeds for those wretched creatures who sell their bodies and kill their souls." The second voyage, a trip to America to see the opening of Hannele, likewise was recorded in the novel, Atlantis. This takes up the experiences of an ocean voyage and mentions





little of America where the author stayed but a short time. Several years later, in 1907, a third voyage, this time to Greece, was undertaken in an attempt to win new life for his work. This trip leaves The Bow of Odysseus and Gabriel Schilling's Flight as memoirs of Hauptmann's experience. At home in Germany he is usually in seclusion where only a few chosen intimates may disturb him. He practically never goes among the people, and even his friends cannot question him. Two years ago, for his sixtieth birthday celebration, Breslau gave a festival week in his honor when his plays were acted. The German Republic paid homage to him with genuine love and admiration. He was welcomed to the city by former President Ebert.

Hauptmann's genius has likewise brought him honors from foreign sources. In 1905 he received an Honorary Degree from Oxford, and in 1912 he received the Nobel Prize for Literature from the University of Stockholm. The poet's own words regarding his philosophy of life which reveals itself as sympathy with human suffering are: "Let man be noble, helpful, and kind! Noble, helpful, and kind; the three words really mean the same thing. Nobility that is not helpful and kind would not be nobility. Readiness to help cannot exist without nobility. Neither can there be kindness without the desire to help others."



True to his words, Hauptmann has been a willing friend to younger poets. Unremitting industry marks his daily life. He occupies himself reading in the field of literature and science as well as revising his own writing unceasingly.

#### REVIEW OF HAUPTMANN'S PLAYS

Vor Sonnenaufgang (1889)

(Before Dawn)

The drama, Before Dawn, deals with a peasant family in the Silesian coal region. The Krauses have become wealthy through the discovery of coal on their property. Of unrefined taste, they spend their time idly and immorally. The older daughter is married to Hoffmann, a shrewd engineer who makes the best of the property. Their children have died in infancy because of weakness inherited from alcoholic parents. The younger daughter, Helen, seems to be free from the taint of drunkenness, for she was educated away from home. Loth, a schoolmate of Hoffman's, is an idealist who visits the Krauses with the intention of studying the labor conditions in the coal mines. Helen and Loth



fall in love. Loth learns from the country physician, Dr. Schimmelpfennig, that it would be madness to marry Helen who would bring into the world unfit children. Without word or explanation, he leaves the house, deserting Helen on the day they were to go away together. Helen commits suicide.

The characterization of Helen was beautiful but that of Loth was very artificial. The play is naturalistic to the core. Hauptmann has been criticized as portraying "unnecessarily crude, stark, and repugnant" scenes in this drama. The representation of things as they are was not due, however, to lack of sympathy and tenderness on the part of the author. The drama, though defective in technique if judged by standards of the past, is natural and life-like. The theme, that vice is an incurable hereditary disease, is deeply pessimistic. It suggests that man is the victim of forces which determine his fate and character long before he is born.

#### Das Friedensfest (1890)

(Coming of peace)

The Scholzes are a family in which unhappiness and discontent are the ruling motives. The father and younger son had had a quarrel over an indiscreet con-



versation which the elder Scholz had had with his groom. After the quarrel, both the elder Scholz and William, the son, leave the home. William becomes engaged to Ida Bachner, a strong, sympathetic girl, who persuades him to return home. He returns on Christmas Eve several years after the quarrel and finds that his father has just returned to his home to die. William asks forgiveness and the father shows his better side.

Dramatically, this play is compact, the time extending over a very few hours. The problem of heredity is the basis of the theme, but this is handled in a way different from Before Dawn in that Ida, the betrothed, brings the atmosphere of peace into the family.

### Einsame Menschen (1891)

#### (Lonely Lives)

The plot of this drama is one which represents an eternal triangle, a man, his wife, and the other woman. Johannes Vockerat is not understood by his family. His wife is the materialist whose wants he cannot satisfy. He, himself, is the idealist who is dreaming of a new world with new codes of morality. A young Russian student, Anna Mahr, visits the Vockerats and Johannes immediately realizes that she fully understands







him and sympathizes with him in his ideals. Anna remains in the house for a long period during which the loyal, delicate wife, Käthe, sees little of her husband. The time comes when Anna is asked to leave, and Vockerat, unable to face life without her, drowns himself.

This realistic drama is dedicated to "those who live lonely lives." We do not question Hauptmann's sincerity in depicting this clash between the ideal and the practical. Everyone recognizes this dualism at some time or other, but it is only those of weak natures who allow it to spoil their happiness or even permit it to bring disaster.

### Die Weber (1892)

(The Weavers)

The Weavers is known as Hauptmann's greatest social drama. The hero is the whole mass of weavers. The Silesian weavers are assembled at the manager's who notifies them of a reduction in wages. The poor workers can endure no more, for the wages are already too low for the starved and weak people. Led by a young man who has just returned from the army, they soon grow into a mob which demolishes the employer's mansion. The soldiers are called to subdue them and



in the ensuing struggle a stray bullet hits the only weaver who did not take part in the revolt. We are led to feel that the old order has been restored for only a moment, and that the spirit of rebellion will bring a new order.

Hauptmann displayed excellent dramatic power and great technical skill in The Weavers. This realistic drama was not given stage room after its first few performances in Germany. Its repression helped to interest people in the work and brought Hauptmann's name to the forefront of dramatists. The idea for the play was given by Hauptmann's grandfather, a poor Silesian weaver himself.

Kollege Crampton (1892)

(Colleague Crampton)

An artist, also a professor in a university, meets with failure because of his dissolute ways. He loses his position and wanders into a dive where he remains unknown for several days. His wife has long since left him, but his daughter has true filial devotion and with the help of friends she refits a studio for her father whose genius was not recognized nor cultivated while he had to teach. He is brought back happily, and we assume he begins a new life.



This realistic play does not have the strength of his former plays. It represents only mediocre work, inspired though it was by Molière.

Der Biberpelz (1893)

(The Beaver Coat)

Mrs. Wolff, a washerwoman, pretends to be an honest woman. She boldly steals wood from the neighbors and finally takes a beaver coat from the magistrate himself. In a scene in the court room she comes out the winner because of a pretentious judge who will not have his eyes opened to facts.

This is a lower class drama. Hauptmann's natural bent is not in writing comedy. He has, however, succeeded in giving us a comic effect through his characterization of the clever Mrs. Wolff.

Hanneles Himmelfahrt (1893)

(Assumption of Hannele)

Hannele is an orphan in the care of her brutal step-father. She has become discouraged with the cruelties of life, and she attempts to drown herself but is rescued and carried to the almshouse where she falls



asleep. In her dream she sees her mother, her step-father, and the Dark Angel who has come to take her through the gates of Death. Before going she is clothed in new white garments and is placed in a crystal coffin where the village mourners ask her pardon for their unkindness. Her step-father slinks off to hang himself. Hannele is called to Heaven by Angels. When her dream ends, she is dead.

This has been called the "most original drama which the world has seen for ages." It is a combination of the realistic and the fanciful. It is well an outgrowth of a German mind which has been trained where fairy tales and country superstition linger in every mountain or forest village. This drama is a recognized work of art, consistent and natural.

When Hannele was first staged in America it was ordered off the boards in New York. It was reviled by the press even before it was played. Mrs. Fiske later played it successfully with the help of skillful staging.

### Die Versunkene Glocke (1896)

(The Sunken Bell)

Heinrich, the bell-founder, has lost his bell in the lake. He lies all night on the mountain-side where he meets Rautendelein, a fairy creature. His





friends find him the next day and carry him to his wife, Magda, and his two children. He is nursed from his illness, but when Magda leaves him alone, Rautendelein steals in and lures him back to the mountain. There he leads the life of an idealist with the fairy maiden, forgetting his cares in the valley below, while he works at his forge with his sprite helpers. Eventually he is called back to his earthly duties by the friends of his old life and the bell tolls from the depths of the mere once again; but he cannot relive his former life without the dream he has renounced. He creeps back to the mountain to welcome death.

The Sunken Bell has been called the most beautiful of Hauptmann's dramas. It is written in poetical form, many passages being of wondrous beauty. The symbolism in this play suggests the theme of the "difficulty of reconciling the highest ambitions of the artist with the common duties of human life." The hero, Heinrich, is driven to and fro between nature and intelligence. Although this drama may symbolize all artists who suffer death in an attempt to attain their ideals, we recognize the autobiographical note throughout.



## Elga (1896)

(Elga)

Elga is presented in the form of a drama. A Knight Errant who has received hospitality in a monastery is deeply in love with his wife. That night he dreams a dream in which the chief characters represent himself and his wife. A count has married the beautiful Elga, who values her husband only as the source of her comfort and wealth. She carries on secret love making with Oginski, her cousin. Her husband learns of her unfaithfulness through his valet and orders Oginski killed ruthlessly.

Elga was adapted from Grillparzer's story by the same title. Hauptmann has presented it with dramatic force in plot and descriptive atmosphere. Elga, a romantic play, has always been a success on the stage.

## Helios (1896)

(Helios)

Helios is a fragment never completed. It begins in a mystical way and has many passages very beautiful and sensuous. Helios is a "treasure house of diction."



## Das Hirtenlied (1898)

(The Pastoral)

The Pastoral, another fragment, is centered around the Bible story of Jacob. He works seven years for his ideal, leaving the rushing city for the quiet of the country.

## Fuhrmann Henschel (1898)

(Drayman Henschel)

A dying wife makes her husband promise not to remarry. He finds it expedient to break his promise by marrying Hanne, the servant girl. She cares nothing for Henschel, but accepted him to further her own pleasures. She neglects her husband's interest, estranges his friends, and soon turns her attention to another man. When Henschel's eyes are opened, he feels himself responsible for his lost honor because of his broken promise. He blames himself for all and dies a broken man.

Drayman Henschel is one of Hauptmann's best social dramas, having a great success on the stage. The writing is strong dramatically. His great character study in this play is Hanne who is "the unity of the play." Minor characters were introduced to give atmosphere to this realistic "folk" drama.



## Schluck und Jau (1899)

(Schluck and Jau)

Schluck and Jau are two vagabonds who are taken into the Prince's castle when they are stupidly drunk. Jau is dressed to suit the station of the prince and when he wakes from his sleep the attendants all speak to him as if he were His Serenity himself. Jau soon assumes the dictatorship and the people of the court are most amused with the occurrences of the day. Schluck is forced to help in the deception by taking the part of Jau's spouse. The following day the two vagabonds find themselves outside the castle gates little realizing how it all happened.

This play is a development of a hint given in the Taming of the Shrew suggests that a prince's life and that of his court is but an airy bubble. Hauptmann wandered into the romantic field here, but was not successful in his attempt. In Berlin the play was pronounced a failure.

## Michael Kramer (1900)

(Michael Kramer)

Michael Kramer is the story of an artist. He has less genius than his son Arnold. Because of certain mental and physical defects, Arnold feels inferior to the social group into which he was born; he seeks



# THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

The history of the city of Boston is a subject of great interest and importance. It is a city of many centuries, and its history is full of interesting events. The city was founded in 1630, and has since that time been a center of commerce and industry. It has been the site of many important events, and has played a significant role in the history of the United States. The city is known for its many historic landmarks, and its beautiful harbor. It is a city of many traditions, and its people are proud of their heritage. The history of the city is a story of growth and progress, and it is a story that is still being written today.



companionship in a depraved quarter, but receives only jeers at his appearance. He commits suicide, having been wholly misunderstood by all. Death brings an ennobling understanding to the elder Kramer who has found religion in his art.

This is a very naturalistic play showing the ugly side of life - vulgarity, foulness, and vice. The characterization of Michael Kramer is well done, but the drama is ineffectively done on the whole. The theme is the "antagonism of near relatives."

### Der Rote Hahn (1901)

(The Conflagration)

Mrs. Wolff, now Mrs. Fiedlitz, is again the heroine as in Der Biberpelz. She contrives to get insurance by burning down the dwelling in which her family lives. With her cleverness she has succeeded in fastening the blame on a poor imbecile who is unable to defend himself.

This play is called a tragi-comedy. It is full of dramatic movement, interest, and natural humor. It is weak as a comedy, for Mrs. Fiedlitz dies in the last act. The characterization is true.



## Der Arme Heinrich (1902)

(Henry of Auß)

Prince Henry is a leper and is cast off by all his acquaintances. All fear his vicinity and he retreats to the mountain where he lives like the wild beasts. Ottegebe, the daughter of a caretaker, has always had a feeling of affection for him ever since her childhood when he called her "my little wife." She is willing to sacrifice herself for him and never forsakes him in his days of deep despair. He agrees to accompany her on a journey which she believes will mean her death for his salvation. Her true devotion wakens in him a great love for her through which he is purified. She is saved to become his bride.

This poetical drama contains passages of the best verse in modern German Literature. The drama, another departure from Hauptmann's naturalistic bent gives us depth of feeling, simplicity of structure, and great strength of character drawing.

## Rose Bernd (1903)

(Rose Bernd)

Rose Bernd, a red-blooded young woman, is betrothed to an anemic suitor, her father's choice. She becomes involved with Flamm, the bailiff, whose sickly wife has had a motherly interest in Rose. Streckman,



a villain of the meanest type, discovers the illicit relationship between Flamm and Rose, and forces the girl to yield to him in order to cover her fall. The man later boasts of his conquest before Rose's father whose moral pride causes him to bring suit for libel against Streckman. Rose commits perjury and after the trial her child is born. Insane with shame and remorse she strangles the babe.

The drama has great artistic merit, having powerful character portrayal. This gives us Hauptmann's best study of a woman seduced. Though the details are revolting in their naturalistic element, the plot is excellent, and there are poetic touches throughout. The action of the play really takes place between the acts. The characters later discuss what was done very effectively.

#### Und Pippa Tanzt (1906)

#### (And Pippa Dances)

Among the snow clad mountains of Silesia the workers from the glass works sit at midnight carousing. Tagliazoni, an Italian, father of the charming Pippa, cheats at cards and is killed. Huhn, a sinister, coarse workman abducts Pippa who has fascinated everyone with her dancing, but Michael Hellriegel, an



idealist succeeds in helping her escape with him. They travel over the difficult ways and reach the cottage of Wann, an aged, mysterious man who sees the pettiness of the entire valley from his summit home. While no one sees him, old Huhn has entered the cottage also, still seeking possession of Pippa. Wann and Huhn enter into a combat in which Huhn is mortally wounded. He pleads for Pippa to dance, and though Wann has warned Michael not to permit it, the maid cannot resist the impulse and drops dead as she dances. Huhn dies at the same moment, and Michael becomes blind. Cheered by the imaginary presence of Pippa, he continues his search for the fair city of dreams.

We recognize a hidden meaning in this drama, for it is impossible to regard the characters literally. Old Huhn represents the material world, and Hellriegel, the ideal, who dreams, errs, and aspires. Pippa is a bubble - the ideal beauty to which it is impossible to fix a definite meaning. Wann is serene wisdom and experience, whose advice is not followed.

This fantastically symbolical play is vividly worked out, and is entirely free from naturalistic, or repulsive content.

Hauptmann's own interpretation of this drama is: "In all of us there lives something which our souls desire; we all seek for something which dances to and







fro before our souls in beautiful colors and graceful movements. This something we call Pippa."

Die Jungfern vom Bischofsberg (1907)

(The Maids of the Mount)

Agathe Ruschewey was courted by Dr. Grünwald, who, discouraged by her father, had gone to South America and remained for several years without writing. In the meantime the father had died. Agathe had become ill and received the solicitous attentions of Dr. Nast, a professor dried to the core by book learning and fastidious notions of propriety. Agathe, though she does not love him, promises to marry him. Then Grünwald returns. Agathe insists on going through with her promise. Otto, a young lad who has been insulted by Nast, plays a practical joke on Nast whose dignity is hurt by the laughter of Agathe and her sisters. He retires from the scene leaving Dr. Grünwald to win Agathe.

The characterization of Nast is very well done, but otherwise Hauptmann has not portrayed his characters well. The play on the stage was a failure and has given critics opportunity to say that the author had exhausted himself with overproduction.

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## Kaiser Karls Geisel (1908)

(Charlemagne's Hostage)

Gersuind, a Saxon girl, has been taken as hostage to the aged Kaiser Karl who is fascinated by her beauty and grace. The people of the realm are much dissatisfied with affairs in the country which is threatened by invasion. Kaiser Karl seems indifferent to the pleas of the Chancellor who asks him to send the shameless Gersuind from the country. In the end the Chancellor gives the maid poison in order to release the Emperor from her influence. As she lies dead in the abbey, the Emperor gives the signal for advance upon the enemies of the realm.

The story of this drama is an imitation of Grillparzer's The Jewess of Toledo. Hauptmann has not been consistent in developing his characters so as to perform the inevitable; instead the words and deeds of Kaiser Karl are highly improbable. We are impressed, however, with the humaneness of a great spirit.

## Griselda (1909)

(Griselda)

Griselda is a magnificent peasant girl whom Prince Ulrich sees in her home and whom he weds to the scandal of his court. He is madly in love with her and

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becomes jealous of their child because its mother cares so intensely for it. The infant is taken away without Griselda's knowledge; Ulrich goes away also when his wife asks for the baby. Griselda returns to her farm work feeling disgusted for having accepted the bounties of the court. Later she returns as a scrub woman to the palace. Ulrich, still much in love, is cured of his jealousy, and the two are reunited.

Griselda, full of picturesque and striking scenes, was founded on a story of Boccaccio. This shows that human nature is essentially the same through the ages. The play savors of Hauptmann's pathological ideas, and has been severely criticized by some critics for this reason.

#### Die Ratten (1911)

(The Rats)

Mrs. John has lost her own child by death. She adopts the illegitimate child of a poor emigrant girl and passes it off to all as her own. The girl breaks her contract with Mrs. John and demands the infant back threatening to tell the truth about it if it is not returned. Mrs. John does all she can to evade the furious mother, but involves herself only deeper and deeper in deceit and crime. At last she ends her life in despair.

Interwoven with this story is one of a stage di-



rector, his daughter, and her lover, which gives a decided contrast to the main plot.

Die Ratten is an excellent tragedy showing how the social surroundings influence character. This drama, however, is also valued for the personal element which Hauptmann brought in. He, himself, is Spitta, the lover in the interwoven plot. This is reminiscent of the time he prepared for the stage.

#### Gabriel Schillings Flucht (1912)

(Gabriel Schilling's Flight)

Gabriel Schilling, an artist sculptor, is harassed by two women. His wife has always made the demands of a materialist and has never sympathized with her husband's nature. The other woman "has demanded nothing" in the material, but her demands upon Schilling's time have been overbearing. Schilling can endure it no longer and leaves for the quiet of an island to which the vampire follows. Exhausted by his inability to escape, he falls sick. His wife goes to see him and when his mistress is discovered a furious quarrel ensues. Overwhelmed, Schilling escapes his attendant, and drowns himself in the sea.

This play was intended for only an intimate circle. This is also autobiographic in nature, being







written the year after Hauptmann remarried. It is the most noted of his later prose plays. The protagonist is a weak character, well portrayed. The naturalism is not the extremely repelling type.

### Festspiel (1913)

#### (Masque)

On the occasion of the hundreth anniversary of German's liberation from the Napoleonic yoke, Hauptmann was requested to write a festival play. This play proved to be highly unsatisfactory from the Crown Prince's viewpoint, for the author wrote it, not with the eye of a monarch, but tried to view the struggle of Germans under the aspects of eternity. He used the device of a "Director" moving puppets to suit his will. The main characters represented by puppets were Napoleon, Frederick the Great, Talleyrand, the philosophers, Hegel and Fichte, and heroes of German independence including Blücher.

The criticism of the Masque lay in the fact that Hauptmann did not honor the men who fought against Napoleon - Blücher and royalty were not hailed as saviors of Germany. The play did not stir up militaristic feelings in the audience, and given for such an occasion showed lack of tact - "Like and after-dinner speaker showing the



dark past in the life of his host." For this reason Festspiel was suppressed, though there were many who took sides with Hauptmann.

The production is not a literary masterpiece; it is written in "difficult verse and the expression is strained."

### Der Bogen des Odysseus (1914)

(Bow of Ulysses)

Hauptmann has here taken the old Greek story of Ulysses. Ulysses returns to his native land after twenty years of wandering, an old man unrecognized. Telemachus, his son, has also just returned from a voyage and is at the swineherd's cottage for safety. He prepares to avenge his honor against the four bold suitors of Penelope, his mother. After dining and drinking, the suitors quarrel with Telemachus and they attempt to slay him using the bow of Ulysses. They cannot bend the bow. Ulysses, thought to be a beggar, then seizes the bow, bends it easily, and after making himself known, kills the suitors remarking to his son: "What will your mother say now that her playthings are destroyed?"

Ulysses is not pictured as of Homeric stature. He is a typical, weak protagonist. Penelope does not appear in the play altho she dominates the whole action.



The beautiful characterization of Leucone, the swinherd's granddaughter, is the best part of the play.

Hauptmann has given a much more savage atmosphere to the play than was given in the original. The criticism that "he has painted a faithless Penelope" is not true, for he has presented the queen as the enigma which she has always been.



## LITERARY TENDENCIES

In his first plays, especially, Hauptmann was feeling his way; the influence of Arno Holz, Johannes Schlaf, and Henrik Ibsen is clearly seen. These men were consistent advocates of realism, and Hauptmann proved to be a bold follower of this movement; he became a leader of naturalism at a time when this tendency was still young, showing his reaction against the classicism which preceded. The modern scientific spirit loves facts, and naturalism attempted to reproduce nature as it presents itself to the scientist or ordinary man. It recognized no difference between art and nature, between great and small. Hauptmann's theory was placed in the words of Spitta, a character in Die Ratten, "Before, art, as before law, all men are equal." There could be in Hauptmann no complication of plot, no artistic beginning, and no artistic ending. "Life comes shadowy from life, and life ends only in eternity."

The great point of criticism among some students of Hauptmann lies in his typical way of producing tragedy. We should not compare Hauptmann's drama with the traditional tragedy where we imagine ourselves in the hero's place suffering with him, but rather must we recognize the different type of tragedy in which we have altruistic pity and sympathetic feeling for the hero's





suffering.

Hauptmann's character drawing has shown us the possibilities of a new method. He does not create universal types, but has developed the exceptional, concerning himself with their struggles. His best character delineations were of the peasant Henschel, Rose Bernd, Helen Krause, Heinrich, Michael Kramer, Mr. Scholz and Vockerat. His characters are ordinary flesh and blood people who move in a realistic way. He places emphasis in some plays on one character, in others on two and in the Weavers on none.

Although Hauptmann was a leader in naturalism, he was always groping to find a different method for expression. We find in him a dual nature of realist and idealist. He has had many dreams -- dreams of the idealist -- and some of his failures were due to the impossibility of expressing "in three dimensions what belonged to four." After his first attempts, Hauptmann has followed as a leader only his own sense of what was beautiful and fine, never turning aside "to amuse or interest or instruct the crowd."

Writing about the peasants necessitated Hauptmann's using dialect to give a true interpretation. In his realistic plays, especially in Die Weber he has employed the broad Silesian dialect which had to be modified for stage presentation. These dialect plays have



contributed much to the literature of Germany being both individual and national.

Hauptmann has not only varied his method from naturalism to idealism, but he has wandered from prose drama to poetic drama to prose fiction. We prefer to classify him as a poet-dramatist, for his "Sunken Bell" period has made him most famous. In recent years he has turned to novels entirely, still seeking the best form "into which to mold his thoughts."

Hauptmann attempts no solution of the problems he sets before us. His dramas cause disturbance because scenes of squalor and misery are depicted without a suggestion of solution. He does not compromise. He says that he has to say earnestly, and though he may contradict himself it is only as a great soul often does. Throughout his work, however, we can detect Hauptmann's sympathy and sensitiveness for the weak, his compassion and sense of wrong. He is a "struggling, unsatisfied man who would blend all the discordant notes into harmony and bring the world into truer life."

Hauptmann's own words on drama and its possibilities are: "I believe the drama to be the expression of genuine mental activity, in a stage of high development. From this aspect there results a series of consequences which enlarge endlessly the range of the drama beyond that of the ruling dramaturgies on all sides,



so that nothing that presents itself, either outwardly or inwardly, can be excluded from this form of thinking, which has become a form of art."



## SUMMARY

Gerhart Hauptmann, student of art, sociology, and natural science wavered for years before he decided to express himself through the medium of drama. Impressed with the ideas of leaders in the field, he first produced simple and powerful plays of a decided naturalistic type. Fame came to him early in life after he had already published the serious social dramas, The Weavers and Before Dawn, and the tragic family dramas, Drayman Henschel and Lonely Lives. He was less successful in his attempts with comedy which he tried at various intervals.

But Hauptmann was ever groping for a new manner of expression. He, therefore, departed quite abruptly from his original tendency and surprised the world pleasantly with a romantic, idealistic, symbolical play written in poetry - The Sunken Bell. This artistic masterpiece was later followed by similar efforts, Hannele, Henry of Auë, and Pippa Dances, which were more successful poetically than dramatically.

Recently Hauptmann has wandered to the field of the novel seemingly intending to remain there. Critics prefer, however, to call him a poet-dramatist, for it is because of "his exquisite poetry" and his "incontestable dramatic genius" that his name and works are destined to live.





Hauptmann is not only a great figure in modern literature, but the "foremost living German Dramatist" today.



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